

PHOTOGRAPHIC INTERPRETATION MEMORANDUM



TELECOMMUNICATIONS
NETWORK CONSTRUCTION
IN THE
LAOTIAN PANHANDLE

NPIC/R-46/68

MARCH 1968

GROUP 1 EXCLUDED FROM
AUTOMATIC DOWNGRADING
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TELECOMMUNICATIONS NETWORK CONSTRUCTION IN THE LAOTIAN PANHANDLE

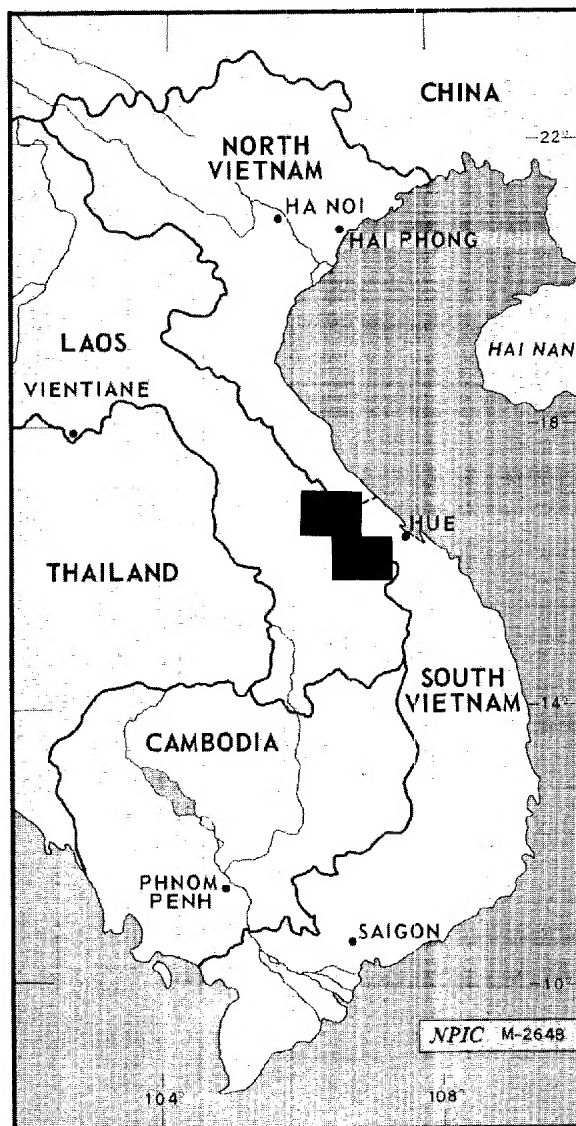
Analysis of recent aerial photography indicates that the communists are constructing two extensive networks of open-wire telecommunications lines in the Laotian Panhandle. For the sake of clarity in this and future photographic interpretation reports, NPIC will identify these networks as Laos/South Vietnam Lines 1 and 2, with branch lines indicated by alpha designators in order of identification. A geographical presentation of the traces involved reveals these lines generally parallel the major communist logistics routes through the same area and, as such, are ideally situated to serve both major communist logistics bases in this section of Laos and enemy units operating in the Khe Sanh and A Shau Valley areas of South Vietnam.

25X1D The first indication of this extensive new telecommunications construction was observed on photography of [REDACTED]. Continuing analysis of photography since that time has shown the networks to be extended as indicated on the map, page 2. The scope of these traces, the amount of effort, and the speed with which the communists have constructed these lines through the rainforest points up their importance to the communists.

La/VS Line 1 is an apparent extension of the previously existing line (North Vietnam Line 3, NPIC/R-267/66) extending through the Demilitarized Zone into Laos. From a point 13 nm west of the DMZ, Line 1 extends generally south, passing through the Ban Dong area, which is an identified staging area on the main route to Khe Sanh. The trace continues south, crossing Route 914, where it turns generally east to a point near the Laos/South Vietnam border, approximately 1.8 nm south of a new unnumbered road being constructed by the enemy (see maps, pages 3 and 5). This road, which extends east from Route 92, was probably used by both the artillery units which attacked Ban Houei Sane on 23 Jan 68 and the tanks used in the attack at Lang Vei on 7 Feb 68 (see NPIC/R-34/68). After a six-nm gap, Line 1 extends southeast, generally paralleling the Se Pone (river), crosses Route 922, to a point at 16-14N 107-00E, where it turns east-northeast and after seven nm (including a three-nm gap) crosses the Laos/South Vietnam border into South Vietnam. The line continues east-northeast and terminates in the A Shau Valley, 24 nm from Hue. Branch 1A, a nine-nm line (six nm discernible), will apparently connect to Line 1 and serve forces in the Ban Dong - Ban Houei Sane area (see maps, pages 3 and 5).

La/VS Line 2 extends approximately 13 nm generally southeast from a point near the junction of Routes 911 and 912, parallels Route 9112, then Route 911, to a point on Route 91. After an eight-nm gap, the line is again observed, approximately seven nm west of Sepone, which has long been used as a major staging area for the infiltration of supplies through the southern Laotian Panhandle. The trace roughly parallels Route 914, then Route 92

(Figure 1), to the Ban Bac area of Laos. Branch 2A extends east from Line 2 at 16-14N 106-39E, near the junction of Routes 92 and 922, generally parallels Route 922 (including a three-nm gap), and crosses the Laos/South Vietnam border adjacent to the Line 1 border crossing at 16-17N 107-07E. From this point, Branch 2A extends southeast approximately four nm toward Ta Bat Airfield in the A Shau Valley. It is interesting to note that although a nine-nm segment (including the common three-nm gap) of Branch 2A parallels and in some instances is adjacent to Line 1, separate traces are maintained throughout this segment (Figure 2), indicating that the two lines remain independent of each other.



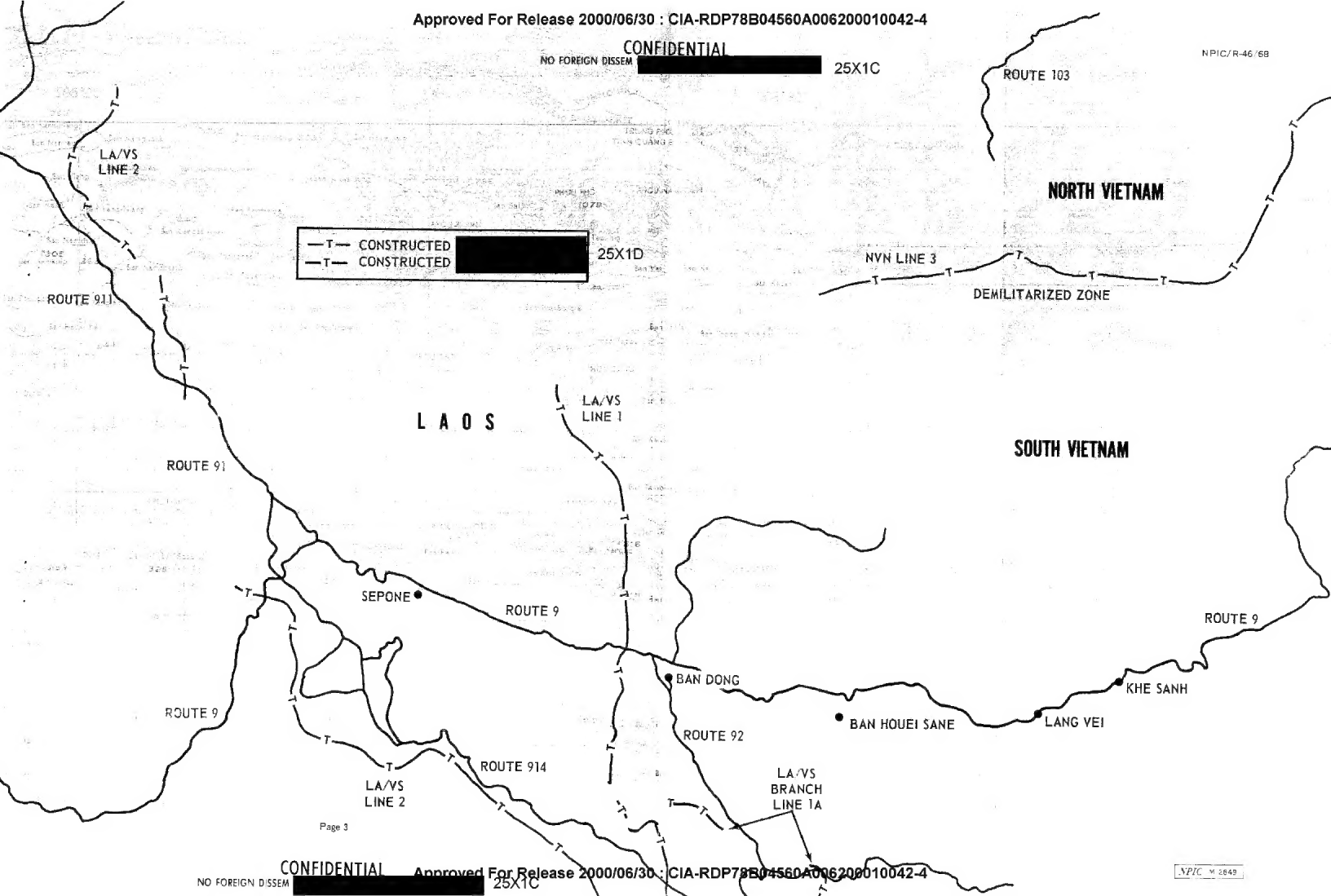
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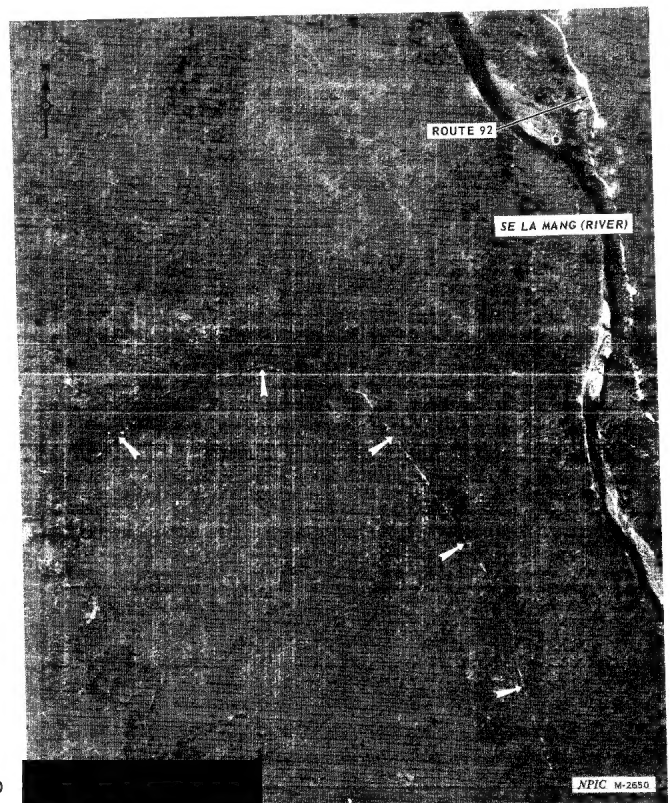


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FIGURE 1. TELECOMMUNICATIONS TRACE APPROXIMATELY 22 NM NORTH OF BAN BAC, LAOS

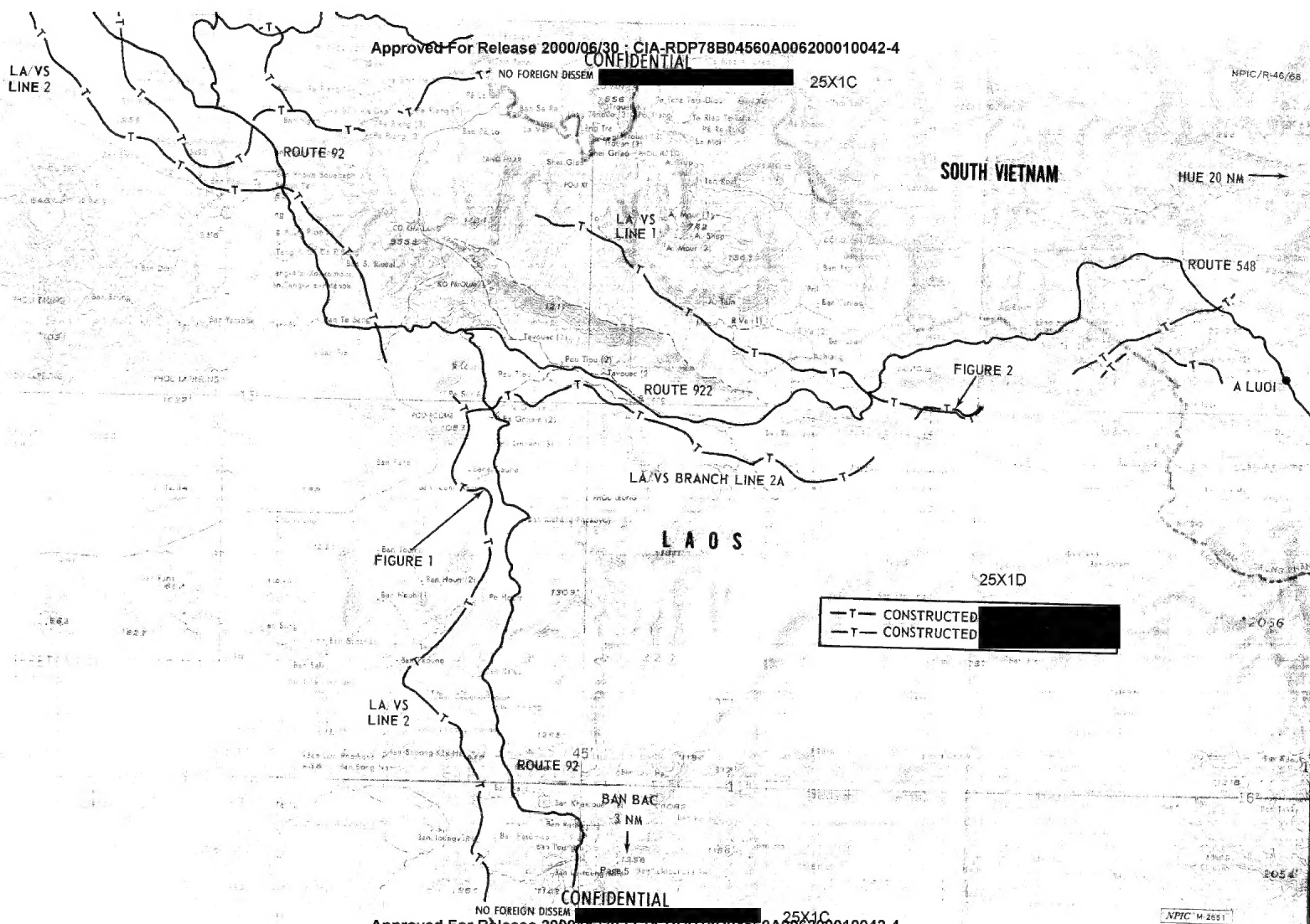
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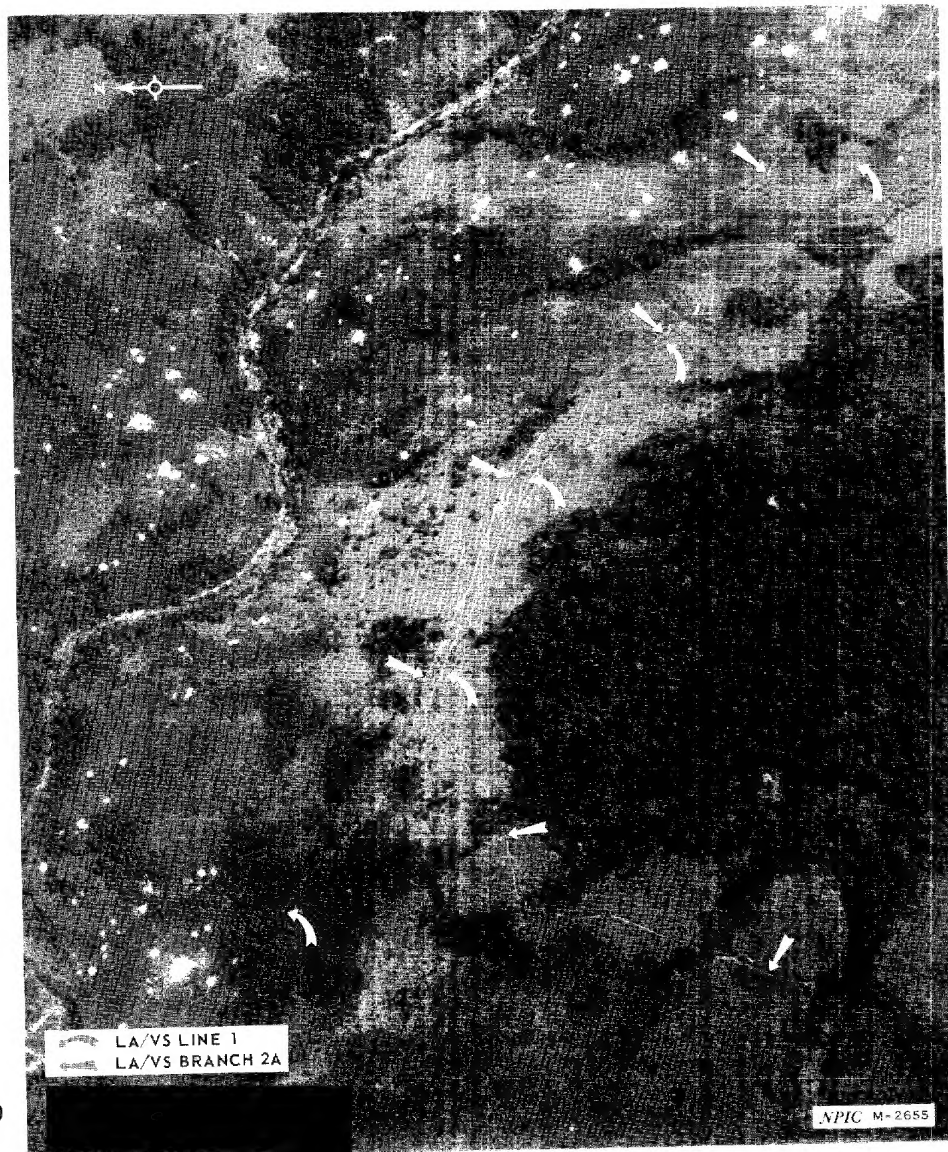
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FIGURE 2. TELECOMMUNICATIONS TRACES APPROXIMATELY 8 NM FROM THE LAOS-SOUTH VIETNAM BORDER

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